New Orleans States-Item

3 June 1972

Letters to The States-Item

Gun buffs contribute to mayhem

Those who keep writing in with special pleading for the ownership of firearms are, I believe, a disgrace to the community and subtly contribute, through the pressure their lobbying creates, to the endless mayhem which guns cause in this country.

The principal error of those who advocate the easy availability of firearms is the assumption that the population can be divided into two sectors: the criminal and the law-abiding. The fallacy here is that the man with a gun in his hand does not become a "criminal", in many cases, until it is too late—that is, until he pulls the trigger.

The fact is, guns are very dangerous things for anyone to have around, particularly small, concealable pistols. These items should be outlawed. Possession of heroin is illegal, why not pistols too? Pistols kill far more people every year than heroin does. As for the practicality of this suggestion, I'm not aware that anyone argued that laws against possession of heroin should be ignored because they were hard to enforce.

The persistent refusal of lawmakers in this country to take any steps towards preventing the proliferation of firearms is a scandal of major proportions, and one that never ceases to amaze foreign observers. Perhaps, however, after four or five more political figures have been subjected to assassination attempts, some slow, reluctant progress will be made in that direction.

Finally, it should be recalled that Oswald, Sirhan and Bremer were not criminals when they bought their guns. They were decent, law-abiding citizens.

Tom Bethell

Pollution control now

The National Environmental Pr Act of 1970 is one of the most sign pieces of conservation legislatio cent years. One of its major pr the requirement that federal agencies file environmental impact statements on all proposed projects and allow for public review of those statements. This has given legal status to the acknowledged principle that rational decisions must be based on all available information, including information on the environmental effects of a project. There must be documentation of all the costs, short and lon term, as well as of the benefits, wh are often mort immediately obvious

In meeting the requirements environmental impact statemer sion, as well as other pro NEPA, federal agencies hav ly upgraded their own awareness and expertise view process has bee many concerned ci providing for more pation in the de of our governm

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QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"We sought to establish not a superficial spirit of Moscow, but a solid record of progress on solving the difficult issues which for so long have divided our two nations and the world."